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Notes of March 9 Interview

1988

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INR has 350 people, 100 of whom are Foreign Service Officers (FSOs); the rest are GS/GM.

255 civil servants
150 analysts, support, operating assistants
50 GS 1 - 7 clerical
100 FSOs

INR has no collection responsibilities. It has an analysis function, and processes covert or electronic SCI data.

They are separate from policy and operating functions, so as to maintain objectivity. INR's work is not cleared by other State bureaus. The 24 hour watch is plugged into intelligence traffic.

INR is organized along geographic and function lines, and has 16 units.

The Civil Service side is tied to Title 5, which State interprets tightly. The department has retained centralized authority for making offers, discipline, promotions. INR is affected by the fact that one third of its staff are FSOs.

Their recruiting is hampered by the lack of a replacement for FSEE and the PACE exam.

INR has never been successful in terminating a probationary employee. The problem is that their managers are not well trained to do this. FSOs must retire at 65, but civil servants can stay, and many do. INR Director Abramowitz wants to know how to get rid of people who have been there as much as 45 years.

They use schedule B appointing authority, which means they can bring someone on for up to four years. At the end of this time, if they want to keep them, they must find a way to do it through regular CS procedures.

Have rank in position. Career ladder for GS-132s goes GS-5 through GS-12. Classifiers approve GS-13s and GS-14s prettily easily.

Rotation to other agencies would be good. They do have a few positions overseas to which they can assign staff. No polygraphs. State is supposed to do a urinalysis of employees, but the contract to do this has not been let.

State's appropriatino is in the State/Justice/Commerce bill. Guidance is from the committees which handle this and the intelligence committees.

The Executive Director (Southwick) is an FSO, and they rotate into this position. Assistant Secy (Abramowitz) is career FSO with congressional approval. Doesn't have to be FSO. Dep. Asst Secy is also career. The reason for the mix of CS and FS staff is that the FS needs people who understand intelligence work, and INR is enriched by people with FS experience.

Open Assignment System was set up in the Foreign Service Act of 1980, based on agreement with the Foreign Service Association. There is a process for bidding for jobs. Employee preference gets "an enormous amount of attention." FSOs bid on jobs in their cone (either political, consular, administrative or economics), plus interfunctional jobs. FSOs bid on six jobs in at least two geographic areas. If they want a DC job, they bid for only these. There are 40 to 100 bids per post in London, 30 to 60 in Kuala Lumpur and 0 - 10 for functional jobs such as INR.

The last time, INR had two jobs, which had seven bids each. Assistant Secy Abramowitz is well known and respected.

Why unpopular?

1) When get to FSO-03, you have 20 years to get into the Senior Foreign Service. Need "hot" jobs, in the mainstream. FSOs are reluctant to spendtime "out of their career" -- INR is not perceived as a spot from which to get a promotion. 125 people didn't make it in 1986; an unprecedented number. This is called "up or out." 300 FSOs have been terminated since this process started. You have one year to phase out, and there is administrative support while you job hunt.

2) Typical FSO doesn't understand INR.

3) CS people are seen as older, and not as dynamic.

INR staff must thus use their own networks to recruit people. Jobs can help an FSO develop expertise in their cont. Lately, there are more rewards for doing something outside your cone. INR is good for someone bored with consular work.

The way the bidding process work,s you bid, if you don't get assigned you rebid. By late March, 60% of the summer rotations are done. The 40% of staff left are "not the best." One third of FSOs in INR had it as their first choice. For the other two thirds, they may not be "top of the line" or may be burned out. Two are three are people who "can't be placed anywhere else."

There is a disconnect between the promotion process and the assignment process. This creates a disincentive to go to INR. In Maddux' opinion, the up or out policy has led to "throwing out some babies with the bath water."

Positions are not designated FSO or CS, they can be either. An ideal situation would be having an alternating system. FSOs don't like to be rated by CS staff. Would be better if they were rated by CS and then the rating were reviewed by another FSO.

Career development is an individual's responsibility to a large extent. The cone system started early in the 1970s. People entered one area and expected to stay in it. There was an understood progression.

INR has two budgets, essentially. One as part of State, another as part of the IC. The intelligence committees may suggest an amount, but by the time it gets doled out by State, it may not all get to INR. Final authority is State authorizing committee.

How could this study benefit INR? If it provided a more "level playing field" on FSO assignments. Something that would make it procedurally easier to recruit FSOs. No problems with CS recruitment. Quality is quite high.

CS staff complain because of lack of career ladder, no systematic training program for them.

Can INR develop an ambitious career ladder for CS unless they join the rest of the IC in "security hurdles?" Southwick says that the resistance to this is a top-down attitude, probably a turf issue. When they recruit, security requirements can't be part of merit promotion. However, they do check security before making a final offer. They require a higher level clearance than top-secret, but no poly.